

We Will Always Be Death Defying by [Likesummerain](#) (AverageBunny)

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Summary:

The Losers are back together, but no one knows how.

Eddie Kaspbrak and Stanley Uris get a second chance at life, but what's the catch?

1. Chapter 1

Author's Note:

Fuck Canon.
Everyone lives.

There are moments clearly marked in our memories as a set beginning or a definite ending. We remember these moments by how they made us feel, and how that feeling has carried over all these years later.

Some memories fade, their feelings attached as they leave us behind.

And then there are moments that we cannot recall where they began or where they ended.

Those memories live longer within us, they become a part of us, and we accept them as permanent parts of ourselves.

Richie Tozier could not remember how this moment started, or where it ended, except with the man at his front door, in broad daylight. A ghost staring back at him, with a smile that scared him, but somehow brought him comfort, too.

“Hey Rich.”

Richie screamed, slamming the door shut on the man’s face. Slumping against it, arms spread out as if to keep it shut, he sank to the floor. His heart beat so fast it threatened to jump right out of his chest. Looking around frantically he reached for his phone.

11:09 am. Saturday, the 12th.

Three weeks since...

Since...

Another knock at the door.

Richie shut his eyes,

“This isn’t real, this isn’t real, this isn’t real,” he chanted to himself.

“Rich?”

No no no no no no no no no-

“Richie, come on man.”

He took a shaky breath, slowly lifting himself up off the ground. He kept his eyes shut, and slowly opened the door again.

“Don’t shut the door on my face again, man, that’s not cool.”

Richie opened his eyes, and clear as day, there he stood.

“Eddie?”

His voice cracked over his name. It was a mixture of confusion and fear and dread.

Eddie smiled and shrugged,

“Hey,” he said.

Richie looked him up and down. He wore the same clothes from that day. The bandage still on his cheek, and a dark stain on his shirt in the very spot he’d...

He had been...

“No,” Richie said, looking back up at him. “No this...this isn’t...no,” he repeated.

“I know this is crazy, and I know what you’re thinking but please, hear me out, this is real, Rich, it’s me, please.”

Eddie took one step towards him and Richie jumped back.

The look on Eddie’s face was quick, gone in a split second, but Richie knew what it was.

Hurt.

“How?” he breathed out. Eddie only shrugged.

“I don’t know.”

“When?” he asked.

“I...don’t know.”

“How did you find me?” he asked.

“I...just knew?” he said, unsure of himself.

“This isn’t happening,” Richie whispered to himself.

“Richie please,” Eddie said quietly.

Richie’s phone buzzed in his pocket and sent a shock through him. He closed his eyes again, reaching for it and picked up without looking,

“Richie, are you okay?”

Mike’s voice rang through, worried and rushed,

“Hey Mike,” he said. He opened one eye, Eddie still standing there outside, watching him with a worried expression.

“Are you okay?” he asked again.

“Sure,” he said, his voice strained.

“Something’s happening. Are...where are you?” he asked.

“In New York,” he said. “And...uh,” he swallowed hard, trying to figure out what to say next. “Eddie’s here, too, Mike,” he said.

Mike’s line was silent, and for a moment Richie thought he’d lost him.

“I thought that might happen,” he said quietly. Richie’s mouth hung open, staring at Eddie, phone still at his ear.

“I’m coming to you,” Mike said. “I’ll be there soon. Keep Eddie there,

please.”

“Uh-huh,” he said, hanging up.

“Mike’s on his way?” Eddie asked.

“Yup,” he said.

They stared at each other until Richie could feel his arm strain from his grip on the door.

“How did you get here?” he asked, finally.

“I wish I knew,” he said.

“Come inside,” he finally said, stepping aside. Eddie hesitated, watching him closely, but Richie kept his eyes on the ground.

“Thanks,” Eddie mumbled, stepping inside. Eddie looked around with great awe at his apartment, but Richie’s eyes only followed him.

“Nice place,” he said, looking up.

“What the fuck man,” Richie finally said. It caught both of them by surprise, it definitely wasn’t how Richie wanted to start but...he figured this was the only way.

“I wish I knew,” he said.

“You died!” Richie yelled. “In front of me! Like five inches from my face! You died!”

Eddie shrugged, looking helpless.

“Richie I wish I knew what happened but...I don’t remember anything. I remember going down the sewers...I remember... *it* ...but that’s all.”

Richie now sat slumped on his couch, Eddie standing in front of him talking slower than he normally did, and that frightened Richie more than anything.

“How...did you get out of Derry?” he asked, finally.

He shrugged,

“I woke up in the townhouse. My car was there when I left, my stuff was gone so that was annoying but I...I just drove out of there.”

Richie thought back to the two suitcases that took both him and Ben to haul out of that townhouse and he could feel his arms ache again.

A very grim thought crossed his mind.

Stan...

An even worse image came to mind and Richie physically shook his head to get rid of it.

“Richie?” Eddie’s voice cut off his thoughts, and he was slightly grateful for it. He rubbed his hands over his face, pushing his glasses up into his hair,

“Yeah?”

“What happened?”

His heart broke at the question, how soft Eddie’s voice was, how childlike the fear in it was.

“Where do you want me to start?” he asked, laughing darkly.

“The sewers,” he said.

Even Richie knew that was a bad idea, and thought as quickly as he could of ways to stall until Mike arrived. He looked at the time on his phone, 11:44 am. Mike’s call was almost half an hour ago, and hopefully he could keep Eddie until Mike got here.

By this time, Eddie had told him the story at least three times, not one word different in each retelling. Richie finally sighed and slumped back into the couch.

“Richie,” Eddie said, growing impatient.

“Listen I...I don’t know what to say, Eddie. I watched you *die* . I watched Neibolt get sucked into the ground and I...”

He trailed off, not sure where to go with it.

“I don’t remember any of that,” Eddie said, growing wide with surprise. “Neibolt got sucked into the ground? Like a sinkhole?”

Richie’s head snapped up in surprise,

“What?” he asked.

Eddie shrugged, still standing in front of him,

“I...I don’t remember anything from that day,” he said.

“What’s the last thing you remember?” he asked.

“Uh....” His eyes darted around in thought, “You,” he finally answered. “You falling out of the deadlights.”

“That’s it?” Richie asked. Eddie nodded.

“But I think...”

The knock at the door cut him off, and Richie was grateful for it.

“It’s open,” Richie called out defeatedly.

Mike burst through the door, eyes falling immediately on Eddie. His mouth hung open in a mixture of disbelief and horror.

The three said nothing. Eddie only waved.

“Hey Mike,” he said quietly.

“Eddie,” Mike said, out of breath.

Mike was fast, crossing the space between the threshold and the living room in a few long strides.

“Eddie!” Mike exclaimed, hugging him tight.

“Whoa-hey there, good to see you, too, man,” Eddie said, almost knocked off balance by Mike’s force.

“You’re freezing,” Mike noted, pulling back from him. His hands were still on Eddie’s shoulders as he looked him up and down.

“I’ve been freezing since I woke up,” he said.

Mike turned to look at Richie but he only shrugged.

“When did you wake up, Eddie?” he asked, seriously.

“This morning. In the townhouse.”

“And what do you remember?” he asked.

“We just got to that part,” Richie said. He sunk back into the couch, arms crossed over his chest. “Pull up a seat.”

“I remember Richie falling out of the deadlights and nothing after that,” Eddie said quickly.

Mike turned to look back at Richie, trying to say something with his eyes, but Richie just stared back at him.

“I got a call from Patty last night,” he said.

Mike didn’t continue, and both Richie and Eddie knew he didn’t need to.

“Stan,” they said in unison. Mike nodded.

“She came home from work yesterday and found Stan sitting in the living room reading a book.”

Richie closed his eyes, the image was too vivid for him and he couldn’t stand it anymore.

“What’s going on, Mike?” Eddie asked.

“I don’t know, but we have to get going.”

“Where?” Eddie asked.

“Ben’s place, upstate. Bev and Bill are already there. Patty and Stan are meeting us there today.” He checked his watch. “They should be there in a few hours so we need to leave now.”

Richie and Eddie looked at each other again, this time, there was a real fear in Eddie’s eyes and Richie’s stomach churned.

He had a bad feeling about all of this.

2. Chapter 2

Summary for the Chapter:

The group learns a little more about what's going on.

Notes for the Chapter:

Kind of a long chapter, but this is really the background stuff. It's a bridge to where I want to take the fic!

Their drive was silent. Richie had volunteered, he needed something to focus on while Mike and Eddie caught up. Gripping the steering wheel, he found, stopped his hands from shaking.

They hadn't stopped shaking since Eddie appeared this morning.

Bev was the first to run out the door and wrap Richie into a hug. Richie leaned into it and realized just how much he'd needed it. But it didn't last long once her eyes landed on Eddie.

"Oh my god," she whispered, still wrapped around Richie.

She pushed him aside, quite roughly, he thought, and stared.

"Eddie," she breathed.

Eddie nodded,

"It's me," he said awkwardly. Bev ran to him with the same urgency she ran to Richie, but with more tears this time.

"You're freezing," she mumbled into him. Eddie smiled, hugging her back,

"So I've been told."

"Where's everyone else?" Mike asked, joining them.

"Bill's inside, Ben went to pick up Patty and Stan from the airport,"

she said. Though she'd pulled out of the hug, Bev held onto Eddie's hands as tight as she could, her knuckles going white.

"Eddie!" They all turned to the door where Bill bounded out, running at full speed towards Eddie.

Richie's eyes were on Eddie, watching the fear grow in his as Bill pulled him into a hug, knocking them both off balance. Bev stepped out of the way just in time but Bill caught himself, pulling Eddie back with him.

"Hi Bill," he said, his voice muffled by Bill's embrace.

"You're back! You're really back," he said, breathlessly, "and you're freezing!"

"I've been getting that a lot," he deadpanned.

"So what the fuck is going on?" Richie asked loudly.

Bev turned back to him,

"We're not sure," she said.

"But Stan's back? From the dead? And so is Eddie?" he continued.

Bev's eyes were red from crying, Bill's hand remained on Eddie's shoulder, but he wouldn't meet Richie's eyes. Mike stared at the group waiting for someone to say something.

"Yeah," she said. "Yeah I guess that's what's happening."

"Did you talk to him?" he asked.

She nodded, biting her lip.

"And?"

"And?" she repeated.

"What'd he say? What'd he sound like?"

"He...sounded like Stan. Like what Stan is supposed to sound like?"

“Did he remember any of us?” Bill asked.

“Yeah,” she said. “He remembered and asked about every single one of us. He knew about Eddie’s death, too,” she added, turning back to him.

“How?” Bill asked.

All eyes were on Eddie now,

“I remember seeing him,” he said, eyes glossed over in a sudden realization.

“When?” Mike asked, walking up next to him.

“Sometime after seeing Richie in the deadlights and before I woke up in the townhouse.”

“What happened?”

Bill and Mike stood on both sides of Eddie, and the back and forth of their questions was making Richie more nauseous than he already was.

“I...I thought I was dreaming. I saw Stan, all grown up, sitting in that field we used to go to.”

“What else?”

“He told me we were home,” he said, his voice barely above a whisper.

It was at that same moment Ben’s car pulled into the driveway, the headlights blinding all of them.

The air went cold and Richie knew they’d all stopped breathing. Waiting.

First was Ben, hopping out quickly, opening the door for Patty who stepped uneasily onto the pavement. They followed her eyes, watching the door expectantly, holding out her hand.

It was almost like something out of those old horror movies he used to watch. One, pale hand bursting through a grave, grabbing onto whoever stood too close.

Richie felt like throwing up.

Slowly, one, pale hand appeared from the door, taking hold of Patty's. She smiled at him softly.

Stan got out of the car, keeping his eyes on Patty, and then turning to the rest of them.

They all wanted to say something, to yell and shout, scream or cry, but it was as though all the air around them had been sucked away.

Stan smiled at them. He dressed exactly the way Richie imagined he would, slacks with a dress shirt neatly tucked in, a cardigan buttoned up. It was so *Stan* that it made Richie smile.

“Losers.”

Stan's voice was quiet, smooth, but filled with hesitation.

They all breathed a collective sigh of relief, smiling at him.

They weren't sure what to do next. They wanted to hug him, but something kept them rooted in place.

“Let's get inside,” Ben finally said, guiding Patty and Stan towards the house. As they walked towards the others, each one stopped Stan to give him a hug.

This should've happened weeks ago, Richie thought, *Stan should've been there with everyone in the first place* .

“Stan the Man,” Richie said quietly, earning a smile from him.

“Hi Richie,” he said softly.

Richie hugged him tight, patting him roughly on the back.

Stan was just as cold as Eddie, he noted.

“We missed you,” Richie mumbled into him.

“I missed you too, buddy,” he replied.

He let Stan and Patty walk ahead of him and waited until Eddie was by his side.

“So,” Eddie said quietly,

Richie looked at him, eyes softening, but his smile fading. Eddie frowned, he knew what was going through his mind, there was no doubt about it.

“Let’s go inside,” Eddie said, one hand on the small of Richie’s back, guiding him forward.

“I don’t get it,” Bill said, rubbing his eyes.

“We just got done with this thing and now it’s coming back?” Ben added.

“This isn’t *It*,” Bev said.

The group turned to look at her. Sitting out in Ben’s backyard around the firepit--and what a backyard it was, Richie couldn’t help but admire. Of course Ben’s house was the most beautiful house he’d ever seen. They all had drinks in front of them, blankets wrapped around them, wearing the same looks they wore not too long ago.

The sun was setting behind them, casting a golden tint over everything around them. Beverly’s hair seemed to burn brighter, the ring on her hand that covered Ben’s certainly glared at all of them, Richie thought, sitting across from him.

Stan and Patty sat with them, Patty’s face white with fear and confusion, contrasted by Stan’s face deep in thought.

“So,” Stan started. They all looked visibly shaken, still not used to hearing his voice, “all you guys had to do was...bully the thing to death?”

It lightened the mood, for sure, all of them laughing at the thought. It was a ridiculous way to put it, if not completely accurate.

“Yeah pretty much,” she said.

Stan kept his head down, rubbing his hands together nervously. He cracked a small smile and suddenly the rest of them relaxed. It didn’t take long for Stan’s small smile to transform into full fledged laughter, and it took even less time for the rest of them to follow suit.

For a moment, the world fell away, their worries disappeared, and all the stress, worry, anxiety had vanished. To any outsider, this was a group of friends enjoying the last of summer’s light.

To them, it was their wildest dreams come back to life.

“If that’s all we had to do we could’ve taken care of it thirty years ago,” Stan finally said, running a hand through his hair.

“And you could’ve done it alone, too,” Richie replied.

“Stan would’ve done it in five minutes tops,” Ben said, ruffling his hair. Stan swatted his hand away, the rest of them laughing. Beside him, Richie could feel Eddie tense up. From the corner of his eye he could see his smile fall.

“So,” Mike started, clearing his throat. “Where do we start?”

They all looked between Stan and Eddie. Eddie crossed his arms over his chest, casting his eyes down, jaw clenched. Stan cleared his throat,

“Where do you want us to start?” Stan asked.

“The scars,” Bill said, looking straight at Stan.

Stan inhaled sharply, looking at his hands.

“From our oath,” Bill continued. “You too, Eddie.”

Eddie and Stan both put their hands up, the scars on their palms

gone, now. But there was a long scar on Stan's wrist, hidden slightly by his watch strap, and they all knew what it was. It looked like an old scar, one that had healed a long time ago. Richie looked to Eddie, staring at his torso where he knew a scar should be, but he was too afraid to ask.

"Is it real, then?" Bill asked, turning to Mike.

"If those scars disappeared, then I think it is."

"And we know Pennywise is gone for good, so, it has to mean things are going back to normal, right?" Bev asked.

Mike nodded,

"We can only hope so," he said.

The group was quiet again. Stan rubbed his wrist nervously, only stopping when Patty put her hand on top of his.

Then Mike spoke up again,

"What about when you woke up?" he asked.

Stan took a deep, but shaky breath. He rested a hand on Patty's next to her, but hers was shaking, too.

"I, uh...I woke up in the bathtub, freezing cold. I remember blood but it'd disappeared when I woke up. It's like, um, it was like a hard reset to the moment right before I..." he trailed off. His grip on Patty's hand tightened. "When Mike called me, all those memories came back to me, and when I woke up, they were still there. I'd seen all of us, grown up, sitting in that field again."

Beside Richie, Eddie's leg bounced anxiously. He wanted to reach out, to hold his hand, to reassure him he was okay, but something stopped him.

"I saw Eddie and I knew he and I were both...." Stan stopped himself once again. He couldn't bring himself to say the words, but they all knew what he meant.

“I saw Eddie and we both knew something was happening, and we both knew that...we were coming back to you guys.”

The group turned to Eddie. He cleared his throat, preparing himself,

“I woke up in the townhouse. In my room, right after Bowers stabbed me? The scar,” he said, pointing to his face, “it was burning, like it had just happened? But I woke up on the bed and it was quiet, there was no one there. But, yeah what Stan said. I had a dream where I saw him and we both knew we were supposed to come back, like we were just waiting for each other to get there. Once I saw him, he said we were home and that’s when I woke up.”

The group didn’t know what to make of the stories, they only sat and listened in shock.

“The turtle,” Mike said suddenly, looking with a face of sudden realization.

The group turned to face him, all of them confused.

Stan and Patty shared a look, but it seemed that only Richie noticed this.

“The Shokopiwh believe that there is a turtle that birthed the universe. Maturin. He gave life to everything, including It. They believe that Maturin can bring people back, too.”

They all stared at him, mouths hanging open slightly.

“Yeah and that’s where I draw the line,” Richie said. “Killer alien clown was hard enough to believe but I saw that thing with my own eyes so I’ll believe it, but a turtle god that created the universe? No, not happening.”

The others murmured in agreement, and Mike sighed,

“Why is that so hard to believe?” he asked.

“Cause I’m done with this shit, man,” Richie said, exasperatedly.

“We all are, Rich,” he said.

“Stan, did you see some benevolent turtle overlord in your dream that brought you back to life?” Richie asked.

Stan paused, like he was frozen in front of them and they all noticed this. A darkness had come over his face for a split second, a blink-and-you’ll-miss-it moment, before he smiled at them again.

“No,” he said. Patty’s face told a different story, but no one pressed her on this.

“Eddie?” Richie said, turning to him.

“No.”

Richie turned back to Mike,

“It’s just a theory,” Mike finally said.

“So then what about...” Bill said, trailing off. He started to say it, his stutter stopping him at the first letter. They could see him stop himself, his eyes cast down, a few tears pooling in the corners of his eyes.

They all knew what he was trying to say.

Georgie.

And that was the strangest part of all of them being back together, their collective consciousness. They were back on the same wavelength, like they could read each other’s minds.

“I’m so sorry, Bill,” Bev said, quietly.

“Does that m-m-mean he’s...he’s...” He couldn’t finish this sentence either.

There was a glimmer of hope in his eyes, the thought that maybe Georgie was back, too. A sick, dark part of Richie’s mind had a feeling they weren’t that lucky.

The turtle, if there even was one, wouldn’t be that forgiving.

“Have you felt anything different lately? Since we got back?” Bev asked.

“Like what?” Bill asked.

“When Stan came back, I’d been seeing him in my dreams for days before that,” Patty said.

It was the first thing she’d said since they started talking. They all looked to her, surprised.

“I had a weird feeling on that day, too. Like a part of me knew he was back...” Stan squeezed her hand and Patty took a breath.

“I was seeing Eddie,” Richie said. The words came tumbling out of his mouth as though he had no control over it. His heart was beating so fast and loud in his chest, he thought he might pass out.

But he kept going, feeling Eddie’s eyes on him.

“Like Patty said...I was seeing him in my dreams for a few days before and then, this morning...”

They were all having trouble finishing their sentences today, and part of that was because none of them could believe what they were seeing right in front of them. Richie felt the same exhaustion weighing him down from the last time they were together, he felt the fear and confusion and anger all over again and it scared him.

Bill’s jaw was clenched, and he wanted to say something, wanted to say yes, *oh god* did he want to say yes he *had* felt something different since they got back from Derry.

But the truth was he hadn’t.

He shook his head, a small tear running down his face.

“No,” he said, his voice cracking. “I haven’t seen G-G-Georgie in years,” Bill whispered. Mike rested a hand on his shoulder, and Richie reached out a hand to his. He opened his mouth to continue, but said nothing.

“So selective reincarnation,” Stan said, instead.

“Sounds like it,” Mike said. “But I think it’s more complicated than that.”

“And none of us know why this is happening,” Stan continued.

“Well,” Ben started, hesitantly, “maybe it’s about balance.”

The group looked to him, each one silently processing the comment.

“Balance?” Eddie asked.

Ben shrugged, slightly embarrassed, but continued nonetheless,

“Yeah, I mean like, balance in the universe. Pennywise killed to keep itself alive, so once we killed it, the ones it killed are returned? Balance restored to the universe?”

“I mean, it kinda sounds like what Mike was talking about back then,” Richie said.

“And maybe it really does have something to do with a turtle?” Ben asked. Richie groaned loudly and dramatically. “I just said *maybe*, Richie,” Ben defended, looking at him.

But something gnawed at Richie, even while they talked about the turtle.

“Richie, you know something we don’t,” Mike said, almost accusatory.

Richie gaped at him, but Bev kept her eyes on him.

They stared at each other, a silent connection pulling them away from the conversation.

“The deadlights,” Bev whispered. All eyes were on her this time.

“What do you mean?” Stan asked.

“When we were kids, I got caught in the deadlights and...I saw us as adults.” She turned to Richie, “And when we went back, Richie...you

got caught in them, too.”

“You got caught in the deadlights?” Stan asked, surprised. For whatever reason, Richie looked to Patty first, watching her face for something he wasn’t quite sure of. She kept her eyes on Stan, though, waiting for them to explain.

“Yeah,” Richie finally said. “But...I don’t remember...”

A terrible pain rose in his head, forcing him to close his eyes. Even with his eyes closed, he could see the bright lights shining around him, gripping him tight, high above the rest of them.

He saw the seven of them standing in a circle by the quarry. There was a light surrounding both Stan and Eddie. The wound on Eddie’s face gone, both of them looked cleaned up.

They all did, for that matter. They were all clean and pristine, standing around talking, smiling.

“ *We’re home,* ” Eddie had said, looking directly at Richie.

His eyes snapped open, looking at Beverly, an understanding look on her face. She nodded at him. He nodded back, reassuringly,

“I don’t remember what I saw in the deadlights,” he said.

“I had nightmares every night until we came back to Derry,” Bev started.

“Mine weren’t nightmares, they were like...visions? Like I said, I kept seeing Eddie and the rest of us in that field.” They were all quiet and Richie knew he needed to fill that silence. “It feels like *It* again,” Richie said. “Like...it’s a message to us.”

“Why do you say that?” Stan asked.

Richie shrugged,

“It feels too...too convenient.”

Beside him, Eddie took a sharp breath. Richie knew he should’ve kept

his mouth shut, but it was too late, now. From the corner of his eye, he watched Eddie, waiting for something-- *anything* --from him. But nothing came. Eddie remained silent and Richie took it as his cue to stop talking, too.

"Then we're gonna have to figure out what it means," Mike said, solemnly.

Richie got a very bad feeling from that. A part of him knew it meant going back, what else could they do to figure out what was going on? This had all started in Derry, and apparently fate thought it was funny enough for their lives to continue revolving around that hell hole of a town.

"So does that mean that B-B-Ben is right?" Bill asked, pulling Richie out of his thoughts. "About balance?"

Ben's cheeks grew bright red, and he looked down, Bev pinched his cheeks, looking proudly at him.

"Ben's usually right about these things, so yeah, he probably is," Mike said, smiling.

Now it was Stan's turn to ruffle Ben's hair in pride. The scene felt too normal, and as much as Richie wanted to enjoy the moment, to ignore everything that brought them to this, he couldn't shake it. His mind was still stuck in those sewers, in Derry, and the image of Eddie's final moments revolved in his mind, no matter how hard he tried to shake them.

But when he turned to Eddie to speak, he stopped himself. The smile on Eddie's face shone brighter than he had remembered it. He was laughing, cracking jokes along with the rest of the group. It had taken no time at all for him to fall back in with them.

He had softened. There was no other word he could think of that worked. His jaw unclenched, brows no longer furrowed, and his smile had replaced the pursed and thoughtful look had been replaced with happiness.

So Richie decided not to say anything for the moment.

Notes for the Chapter:

Please let me know what you think, I appreciate any and all feedback!

3. Chapter 3

Summary for the Chapter:

Think Jade of the Orient scene but...

better.

And no creepy fortune cookies.

“Dinner!” Ben called to them, but at this point they were all huddled around each other, sharing photos, stories, memories, and everything in between.

The Losers Club had come home to each other.

Together, they stumbled back inside, blankets still wrapped around them, grateful for the warmth in the house, heading straight for the boxes of pizza and cases of beer set on the kitchen island.

Richie kept his eyes on Stan and Eddie, thinking back to the horror stories he used to read as a teenager. Those who return from the dead don’t eat, they don’t drink. So far, the only thing that checked out from those stories were the fact that the undead were always cold, and they could not remember how they died or came back to life.

But the food thing, it turned out, was wrong. Both Stan and Eddie ate and drank like nothing was different and it put Richie’s mind at ease.

“What’s going on with you, tonight, Tozier?” Bev asked, taking a seat next to him. Though the group all sat together Bev and Richie took seats at the table away from the rest of them, watching them.

“Nothing,” he said, smiling, holding his drink up to her. She tapped her bottle against his, but frowned at him.

“It doesn’t feel right, does it?” she continued, watching Stan and Eddie.

“It feels so fucking weird,” Richie said, exhaling so hard he slumped down next to her.

“But they’re back, and that’s a miracle,” she said.

“I know, and it makes me feel awful that I’m not just...accepting it. That the entire time we’ve been here, I’ve been staring at Eddie and waiting for all of this to just disappear until I wake up and realize it was a dream,” he said. Bev wrapped an arm around him, resting her head on his shoulder.

“I know, Richie,” she whispered, “but maybe this time...we get the happy ending, no strings attached.”

Richie closed his eyes, resting his cheek on top of her head,

“God I hope you’re right,” he mumbled.

Richie opened his eyes and followed Patty, for a change. He watched as she mingled with the rest of the group with ease, sticking close to Stan’s side, always one hand on him somewhere, resting on his shoulder, set on the small of his back, or just holding his hand.

He realized that she wore the same look as he had all day. Watching Stan with such a close eye, as though he might vanish right in front of her. Keeping one hand on him was her way to assure herself that he was real, that this was all real and they were going to be okay.

His heart broke for her.

“She’s tougher than I realized,” Richie said. He could feel Bev’s head bobbing up and down in agreement,

“We got our memories back and we freaked out and nearly ran away from each other. She’s hearing it all for the first time and she hasn’t so much as flinched,” she said.

“He’s a lucky man,” he said.

“You two sick of us already?” Eddie called to them. Richie’s heart jumped at the sight of him smiling, teasing them again.

It was the kind of feeling he’d craved for so long, one he’d denied himself from wanting, the feeling he almost got before it was ripped away. And now it was right here in front of him, and it took every ounce of will power to fight off every bad thought he was having right now.

“Never takes long with you guys,” Bev said, not moving from her spot. Ben slid their plates over to them, adding a small wink in for Bev. Richie winked back at him, adding in an air kiss for good measure. Ben laughed and blushed only slightly. Richie was proud of that.

“How’re you doing?” Richie asked, for a change. She knew what he meant.

They all wanted to ask, but no one could find the right moment, given everything else they had to deal with at present.

Her divorce had gone public, and her ex husband wasn’t making things easy for her.

Bev’s smile faltered, but in true Beverly Marsh fashion, it came right back up.

“Good,” she said. She looked back at Ben, telling stories to Stan and she smiled, “We’re good.”

“I’m sorry, Bev,” he said. She rubbed her hand on his shoulder, “You want me to kill him for you?”

She snorted, but Richie swore he saw her think it over quickly.

“I think I’m good,” she said.

“Cause I’ll do it, ya know,” he said, “they never suspect the comedian.”

“You’d give yourself away before the cops could even find him,” she said.

“Your lack of faith hurts me, Beverly,” he said, putting a hand over his heart.

Bev only rolled her eyes,

“Have you talked to him, yet?” she asked. He shook his head,

“We haven’t exactly had a minute alone yet,” he mumbled.

“Don’t wait too long, Rich,” she said, quietly.

He smiled,

“I won’t, promise,” he said. “What about you and Ben? How’re you two doing?” he asked, quickly changing the subject.

Bev looked at him for a moment, but decided not to push him on it.

“We’re getting married,” Bev said quietly, playing with her plate.

Richie snorted into his drink,

“The ring kinda gave that away,” he said. She held it out so that only they could see it. A large, oval stone perched on top of a delicate gold band, it looked like it was meant just for her. “I’m surprised you haven’t already,” he said, finally.

“We’re just...waiting for all of this to...you know...” she said, trailing off. Richie nodded, smiling at her.

“When’re you planning it?” he asked.

“Next year,” she said.

“Big traditional one or Elvis impersonator in vegas?” he asked.

“Elvis impersonator, definitely,” she said, winking.

“Well my Vegas shows end in January so I’m not sure I’ll be able to make it,” he said.

Bev pinched his side, sending him jumping in his seat,

“Ow!”

“No jokes, Richie,” she scolded. “Not tonight, at least,” she added quietly.

“Utmost apologies, my lady,” he said in the awful British accent that always got a laugh out of her.

She pressed a kiss to his cheek and pulled him back to the rest of the

group with her, letting themselves enjoy their time together for a little bit longer.

“No no, wait, I know *exactly* what Stan’s wedding looked like, I can picture it right now!” Richie yelled over the rest of them. “It was probably in a barn and his vows had something to do with birds and mating patterns or some shit like that. Let’s see, what else … ” Richie trailed off.

“Nothing else,” Stan said.

“No, there’s *definitely* more. His vows were probably beautiful, but he must’ve thrown in one ‘fuck’ at JUST the right moment, right? To make all the grandparents gasp!”

Patty nodded, watching him,

“Said he was the ‘luckiest fucking man in this entire fucking world’,” she said.

“Two ‘fucks’ in one sentence? Stanley, you rebel,” Richie joked.

Stan winked at him, and Richie threw his head back in laughter.

“Did he get wasted and dance to…god, what was that song?” Richie asked, snapping his fingers impatiently, “the one he played on repeat until we almost smashed his walkman over his head?”

“Just Can’t Get Enough,” they all said in unison.

Patty looked somewhat horrified, and Stan shook his head,

“That’s the best song ever, guys,” he said.

“Stan it’s probably the worst song ever,” Mike said.

“He got drunk and danced with me to it. Twice.” Patty winced slightly, as she said it.

“Twice?” Bev and Richie asked in unison.

“What’s Stanley like drunk, anyways?” Bill asked.

“Dancey,” Patty said.

“Really?” Richie asked, a mix of horror and absolute joy on his face.

Stan rolled his eyes,

“Dancey and tells everyone how much he loves them,” she said. “There was a point where he wouldn’t let go of his grandmother, remember that?”

“She pulled me aside the next day and told me that if I ever got drunk like that again she’d kill me,” he said, smiling fondly.

“Oh my god,” Richie breathed, “and we *missed* that?” he asked.

Stan shrugged,

“I don’t wanna know what it would’ve been like with you all there,” Stan said.

“You’d have killed us all,” he said.

Stan nodded.

There was a pause, and Richie spoke again,

“But was I right about the vows?”

Stan and Patty looked at each other, laughing, the rest of the group whistling, clapping him on the back.

“Those fucking birds,” Richie said.

“Those fucking birds,” Stan repeated, raising his drink to Richie, who followed suit.

“You know it’s a shame, the five of us?” Richie said, motioning at the group, “We would’ve given the best fucking speeches ever.”

“I’m sorry, I’ll be sure to invite you to my next wedding,” Stan said sarcastically. Patty rolled her eyes, and Stan kissed her forehead. “Did

she show you pictures? Is that why you know all this?" Stan asked, nodding at Patty.

Richie looked to Patty, mouth hanging open in awe,

"Are there pictures of him drunk?" he asked, excitedly.

"So many," Patty said, matching his tone.

"I need those," he said.

"Me too!" Bev added.

"Beep beep, Richie," Stan muttered into his drink. Richie only flipped him off,

"Love you, too, Staniel," he shouted.

They'd learned their stories, relearned their memories, and shared everything they could think of, scared that they might lose it if they didn't say it right away.

It led to a scene of total chaos, though that wasn't unusual for them, but it was something they hadn't seen in a very long time.

They were stretched out in the living room, now. Richie lay on the floor beside Mike. Stan and Patty were curled up on the couch, opposite Ben and Beverly. Eddie sat on Richie's other side, and Bill on the floor next to Stan.

"So Benjamin," Stan started, looking at him seriously. "What the fuck took you both so long?"

Ben and Bev smiled at each other,

"Long story," Bev said.

Stan snorted,

"I thought the poem would've done the trick," he said.

"You knew about that?" Ben asked.

“Ben, everyone knew about the poem,” he said.

“I didn’t,” Bev said.

“You didn’t know that?” Stan asked.

“I thought it was Bill,” she said.

Stan snorted, his drink flying into his face,

“Bill?” he asked in surprise.

“What’s so funny about that?” Bill asked, innocently enough.

“I mean, sure Bill is a good *writer*, but...” Stan started.

“Debatable,” Patty mumbled,

Bill looked at her, shocked. Patty shrugged,

“You...you don’t like my books?” he asked.

“Another conversation,” Stan said, patting his shoulder, “Bill’s a good writer, but he’s not a poet. There’s a big difference in that. And ‘january embers’? Bill *wishes* he could write something like that.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Bill asked, growing annoyed.

“It just means Ben knows how to write an ending,” Stan said, taking another sip of his drink.

“Strong words for a guy who just came back to life,” Bill mumbled.

“Still a better story than your last one,” Stan said.

“You read it?” he asked, happily surprised.

“Yeah and I wanted to kill myself the entire time,” Stan deadpanned.

“Should’ve seen the movie,” Richie said.

“That wasn’t my fault,” Bill said, quickly and defensively.

“It was still your book,” Richie said.

Bill frowned, but the rest of them were laughing too hard.

One thing death hadn’t changed was Stan’s sharp tongue.

“Okay but if you knew it all along, why didn’t you say anything when she thought it was Bill? You would’ve saved me like, three decades worth of pining,” Ben said.

“I thought you were gonna tell her?” he said, but it came out as more of a question.

“Why?” he asked.

“Why not? You were the one with the crush,” he said.

“What? You tell your crush you like them? To their face?” Richie asked, lifting his head only slightly. He could feel Eddie nudge him with his knee.

“Yes,” Stan said, “that’s how I got married.”

“Well none of us are married so, wrong crowd,” Richie said.

“To be married,” Ben said, raising his and Bev’s hands up. She buried her face into his shoulder, but she couldn’t hide the smile that came over her.

“Divorced,” Bill said bleakly.

“That doesn’t count, Bill,” Stan said.

“I know,” Bill said quietly, staring at his drink. Mike patted him on the shoulder, consolingly, and Bill smiled at him.

“Wait,” Richie said, sitting up quickly. He stared at Eddie, but Eddie refused to make eye contact.

“I know what you’re gonna say Richie but I--”

“You have a WIFE, Eddie!” Richie blurted out. He regretted it the instant he said it. He blamed it on how many drinks he’d had so far,

but even Richie knew that was bullshit. The thought hadn't left his mind since the drive over.

The group was quiet.

"Well I haven't exactly had time to go and see her," he mumbled, staring at the ground.

"She's in New York, though," he said.

Eddie nodded,

"What're you gonna do?" Bev asked.

"I...don't know," he said, exhaling deeply.

"She had a funeral for you," Bev said quietly.

"I know. She's had that plan in the case of an emergency since we got married."

"Richie was the one who told her," Bev said.

Eddie finally looked up at him, and now it was Richie's turn to look at the ground.

"You did?" he asked. His voice was quiet, and though Richie tried, he couldn't detect any tone in it. It was completely blank, only the slightest bit of surprise there at the end.

"Um, yeah, yeah I...I took your stuff to her. Your address was written on everything so, I figured she um, she should know."

Richie peeked up above his glasses, Eddie only nodded.

"Thank you," he said, his voice even quieter now.

"What're you gonna do?" Richie asked.

"I have to go see her," he said.

The mood in the room shifted, their laughter ceasing, and the air around them became heavy, making it harder to breathe.

“Eddie listen-”

“We don’t have to talk about this right now,” Eddie said, looking away. “Stan was about to beat the shit outta Bill.”

“No he wasn’t!” Bill defended.

Stan took the hint, starting a new conversation about Bill’s books. The rest of them followed suit.

He’d managed to change the subject, but his tone didn’t. The rest of them laughed, their attention returning to Stan, except Richie’s.

The mood returned to normal, little by little, but Richie and Eddie found themselves on the outside of the group once more, sitting next to each other, the questions of their reality left hanging over them like a thick, dark storm cloud.

Richie’s heart beat faster, but he took the risk he’d stopped himself from taking all those years.

Slowly, he moved his hand closer to Eddie’s.

It sat there for a moment--an eternity, it felt like--by itself. He cursed himself, told himself over and over to get a *grip*, *Richie* , this wasn’t the time or the place.

But Eddie surprised him, too, and let his hand rest over Richie’s.

It was a start.

If he closed his eyes long enough, he could drown out the other voices with the sound of silence.

If he focused enough, he could be at peace in under ten seconds.

But no matter how hard he tried, there was a sharp ringing in his ears that made it impossible to think.

The harder he tried, the more it felt like thousands of voices talking

at once in the back of his mind.

“How’s it feel?”

Eddie’s eyes snapped open and turned to see Ben standing at the balcony door, looking up at the night sky.

“A lot better out here,” Eddie said. “It’s a really nice place, Ben.”

“Thanks,” he said, walking up to him. “Feels a lot better with you guys around. Feels more like a home.”

They were quiet for a moment, around them bugs chirping. Inside the lights were getting too bright, and their laughter too loud for him to handle. This wasn’t the first moment, he thought, that everything around him became too much.

Upon waking up, it seemed everything was too bright and too loud and just too... *much* . He shut his eyes and imagined just a blank space around him, trying to calm himself down.

The backyard seemed a better place for that.

“You okay, Eddie?” Ben finally asked.

“Never better,” he said.

“Seriously,” he said.

“Seriously, Ben.”

Ben sighed,

“You and Richie haven’t talked yet, have you,” he said.

“It’s all we’ve been doing,” Eddie said, smiling wryly.

“I mean about what happened.”

“And what happened, Ben?” Eddie asked, impatience rising in his voice.

“In the sewers...Eddie we all saw it,” he said.

Eddie scoffed, making strange noises instead of giving him an answer.

“You think I don’t know what that was?”

“What was it, Ben?” he asked, annoyed.

“You love him,” Ben said, quietly.

It felt like the wind had been knocked out of him, he couldn’t respond.

He wasn’t sure what he’d say, though.

“You love him and you didn’t get to say it back there, and now you have a second chance.”

Ben’s voice was low, almost a whisper. There was a silent bond between them in that moment, a kinship that Eddie knew, from the beginning, but he tried to push it out of his mind.

But as Ben said it aloud, Eddie came face to face with his own truth, one he told himself he was too busy to face.

“Yeah, I do,” he said, his voice breaking.

“The longer you wait, the more it’s going to hurt,” he said.

Eddie snorted,

“It’s...not as easy as that,” Eddie finally said. “I can’t just go up and say, ‘hey remember right before I died? Well yeah, actually what I was going to say was that I loved you and have always been in love with you!’ I mean between trying to get Richie to believe that it’s really me come back to life and telling you all my story for the hundredth time today, I haven’t exactly had time to tell him all of that!”

Eddie finally exhaled, and Ben was somewhat impressed that he’d managed to say that all in one breath.

“What about now?” he asked.

Eddie stared at him,

“No, I don’t think now’s a good time, either,” he said.

“Why not?”

“Because!” Eddie yelled.

“Because what?”

“Ben I swear to god...”

Ben put his hands up in mock surrender,

“All I’m asking is, when is it going to be the right time to tell Richie how you feel?”

“I don’t know! Maybe I should ask the turtle?” he spat.

Ben rolled his eyes, but he remained patient with him.

God, Eddie really hated how calm he was.

“I don’t know when I’ll be able to talk to him,” Eddie said. “Every time he looks at me, he looks terrified, like...like...”

“Like he’s seen a ghost?” Ben said, smiling slightly.

“Very funny,” Eddie deadpanned.

“I’m sorry, continue,” he said.

“All night he’s looked at me different. He hasn’t made any jokes, he won’t look me in the eye, and when he does look at me, he just keeps looking like I’m gonna break.”

Eddie’s hands shook, and his voice trembled.

“He’s just in shock,” Ben said, quietly.

“And I can’t put him through anymore than this right now,” he said.

“I get it,” he said, “but I think you both have been through enough to

just tell him that you love him.”

“Not yet,” Eddie said.

Ben put his arm around him,

“You’re not going to regret telling him how you feel,” he said, “take it from me.”

Eddie smiled slightly, and Ben took it as a good thing,

“Yeah aren’t you guys lucky,” he said, sarcastically, though there was something genuine in his voice.

“You have another chance, now. You shouldn’t keep yourself waiting like this.”

“But what if I’m wrong?” he asked.

Ben sighed,

“He was literally holding your hand just now, back there,” Ben said.

“You saw that?” he asked.

“Eddie we all saw that. We’ve all been looking for it since you got here.”

Color rose in Eddie’s cheeks, and he looked away, slightly embarrassed.

“I don’t think he’d try to hold your hand if he didn’t feel the same,” he said.

Eddie tried to reply, sputtering out something incoherent. Ben took mercy on him and clapped him on the back,

“Do you really want Stan to drag you within an inch of your new life for not speaking up sooner?”

Eddie laughed,

“No, death somehow made him even more lethal,” Eddie said.

Ben sighed, his arm still around Eddie,

“You’ve suffered enough, Eddie. You deserve to finally live the life that makes you happy.”

Eddie nodded, biting his lip,

“Thanks Ben,” he said.

“Come inside, I think everyone’s about ready to go to sleep,” he said. Eddie shook his head,

“I’m gonna stay out here a little bit longer,” he said.

Ben nodded,

“Take it easy, Eddie,” he said as he left.

Eddie took a deep breath of the warm summer air around him. He let his shoulders drop, and watched the stars overhead.

Ben was right.

He deserved to live the life that made him happy.

Notes for the Chapter:

Please let me know what you think! I would love to hear your guys' thoughts and opinions on the story so far!

Also!

The song Stan gets drunk to at his wedding:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_6FBfAQ-NDE

4. Chapter 4

Summary for the Chapter:

Points are made.

“So,” Richie started.

Now, it was only him and Eddie left, sitting outside in the backyard. The rest of them were making sleeping arrangements, finding as many blankets and pillows as they could.

Eddie had disappeared during that chaos, and Richie found him sitting outside in the grass, his eyes closed, taking a deep breath of the last bit of summer air.

“I think we should talk,” he continued.

Eddie didn’t say anything.

Richie sat beside him, stretching his legs out in front of him, leaning back on his palms, running his hands through the dewy grass.

“About...that day,” Richie said.

“What do you wanna talk about?” Eddie asked.

He’d planned this, hadn’t he? The whole car ride up here, he’d planned out a long, heartfelt speech to Eddie about what had happened, what he wanted to say then, what he wanted to say now.

And all at once he choked on those words, stuck in the back of his throat, trying to break out.

“You took my stuff back,” Eddie said, suddenly.

“Or we can talk about that,” Richie mumbled.

“Why?”

He shrugged,

“It was all...it was just sitting there in the townhouse, I didn’t wanna leave it there.”

“You could’ve,” he said.

“But I didn’t want to,” he repeated. “Eddie, look, I just...”

“You have to just say it, man,” he said, “and stop looking at me like I’m...I’m gonna break, or something.”

Eddie’s voice cracked as he spoke and Richie hated himself just a little more with each word.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to,” he said, quietly. He sat up straight, folding his arms across his chest.

“This entire time, you all have been looking at me and Stan like we’re made of glass and the wrong move is just gonna break us again and...except Patty! She’s, like, the only one who’s accepted that he’s back! She’s holding him, and sitting with him like nothing’s changed! And she’s the only one who’s not treating him, or me for that matter, like we’re so fragile! I mean, she barely even knows me but she’s ...”

He trailed off, but Richie knew what he meant.

He always knew.

“That’s not what I wanted to do,” Richie said. “I just, I can’t believe you’re here.”

“Well I am!” he exclaimed.

“And I’m still processing,” Richie continued.

“Process all you want just ...stop looking at me like that. I hate it.”

Richie nodded.

“I just feel like...I’m gonna wake up any second now and you’ll be gone again and I don’t wanna feel like that again.”

“Why?”

“Because I lost you once,” he said, his voice barely above a whisper, tears threatening to fall with each word he spoke. “I can’t do that. Not again.”

Eddie finally looked over at him and they made eye contact for the first time since that morning.

“I’m back, Rich, I’m not going anywhere,” he said, softly.

“We don’t know that!” Richie exclaimed, holding back tears. “We don’t know what any of this is! And I don’t want to get my hopes up and wake up to my alarm tomorrow and find out it was all a fucking dream!”

“You...think it’s temporary?” Eddie asked.

“I don’t know! I’m just trying to figure it out!”

“We all are, man, it’s okay,” Eddie said.

Richie opened his mouth to speak again, but this time the tears fell, and his words vanished. He looked away, unsure of what to do next.

The two sat in silence, staring at the night sky, not sure where to go from here.

“I’m gonna go inside,” Eddie said, after a moment. “You coming?”

Richie stared at him for a moment,

“Uh...later. I’m not tired.”

Eddie watched him closely, but finally nodded,

“Okay,” he said, quietly, before leaving.

Richie hadn’t realized he was holding his breath until he heard the balcony door close. He exhaled and closed his eyes.

It would be a long night for him, he thought.

Slowly, the lights inside began to dim, and whatever shadows they cast disappeared in front of him.

Richie wasn't sure how long he'd been outside, dozing in and out of sleep as he lay there, his jacket serving as a pillow.

When he found he couldn't sleep for long, he sat up and pulled out a cigarette.

"Trouble sleeping?"

Richie jumped, hiding the cigarette quickly, looking around him.

Patty waved from the balcony door. She was wrapped in Stan's sweater from earlier that evening.

"Not the only one, I guess," he said.

"You got another one?" she asked, nodding to the cigarette.

Richie pulled out his pack, shaking it around,

"Come on over," he said. She sat close to him as he lit it for her, crossing her legs on the grass taking a long drag of her cigarette.

"Stan hates this habit," she said, quietly.

"Always did," Richie said, "but I always thought it was just because I'd blow smoke in his face."

"Yeah that might've done it," she teased.

They were quiet for a moment, watching the stars overhead, listening to the sound of the wind rustling the leaves.

Richie wanted to say something to her, but didn't know where to start. This was the only person of their group he truly knew nothing about.

He knew she was Stan's wife, that they'd met in college, that they'd been married for a few years before everything happened. But he didn't know *her*.

"You and I are in a similar situation, I hear," she said, finally. Richie was grateful to her for picking up the conversation.

“Yeah?” he asked. She nodded.

She had one hand outstretched behind her and leaned back, tilting her head up to the sky with her eyes closed.

“The man you love has just come back to life after you’d finally made peace with his death,” she said nonchalantly.

He’d never told her that, and in fact, no one had ever called Eddie that to him,

The man he loved .

Why was this the first time he was hearing that phrase out loud?

Richie didn’t know what to say, so he only nodded.

“So now the question is: Where do we go from here?” she asked, though she wasn’t really looking for an answer.

“How did you react? When you saw him?” he asked.

Patty smiled,

“I screamed at the top of my lungs,” she said. She blew another puff of smoke. “What about you?”

“I slammed the door in his face and fell on the ground.”

“Nice,” she said, nodding. “I saw you two out here earlier...you both looked like you were arguing and I...just wanted to say I understand. It’s scary as hell, isn’t it?”

Richie nodded,

“Apparently I’m not doing so great with all this,” Richie said.

Another silence, filled with smoke between them, and the deep sighs of two people whose minds were racing too fast to talk.

“You know, I was gonna reach out to you after...” Richie started.

Patty smiled, waving her hand between them,

“I know,” she said.

“You do?” he asked. She nodded,

“Beverly was the first person to reach out after the funeral. She said she was going to come out and see me. We were planning something and then all of this happened,” she said.

Her voice was surprisingly calm throughout, especially for a woman whose husband had just come back to life. She shook her head and continued,

“You know there was always...a gap...in Stan’s memory. I would ask him about his parents, about his hometown, his friends and it was as if that part of his life vanished. He remembered some things, but never any names or anything specific. I just thought it was because he was always forgetting things, but that wasn’t true. Stan has the best memory of anybody I knew. So I figured things were so bad that he’d rather not talk about it. And then there were moments where memories would come back and he would look like he’d seen a ghost.”

Patty’s eyes were glossed over as she stared out into the distance, her cigarette still elevated in her hand. Richie could see her hand shaking, the cigarette threatening to fall out of it. Richie reached out, holding her hand steady. She smiled and took another shaky breath,

“They did an interview with Beverly, once, on one of those morning shows about her new line. The look on Stan’s face when he saw it was...something between horror and joy. When I asked him about it, he just said that she looked familiar. It happened again when we saw part of your stand up. You made some joke and Stan laughed and said something like ‘of course he’d say that’, but it was the same look of horror and joy. I asked him about it later, because it wasn’t like him to watch those stand up specials, and he just it had caught his attention, nothing more. But there was always more. And then he started bringing home those books and...” Patty shook her head.

“You guys saw my standup?” Richie asked, smiling. Patty rolled her eyes, but still smiled.

“A little bit. He watched it with this morbid fascination, since it was never stuff Stan was into. But...you just drew him in and he kept watching.”

Richie smiled,

“None of us really forgot each other, there was always a part of us that remembered, even if we didn’t understand,” he said.

“That’s what he told me. He said you never really leave Derry, you grow apart, but it’s one of those towns that always pulls you back.”

Richie sighed and took another long drag of his cigarette, almost down to a nub. He pulled his knees to his chest and sat forward,

“You must think we’re crazy, now,” he said. Patty laughed, and he was grateful for the sound, it put him at ease.

“That’s one way to describe it,” she said. “You know, if I’d heard all this a month ago I would’ve thought Stan was playing a joke on me, but now...Now it’s the only thing that makes sense...” She trailed off, shaking her head.

“Welcome to the club,” he said.

“It’s very cute that you all call yourselves the Losers Club,” she said. Richie snorted,

“Wasn’t all that cute thirty years ago,” he said.

“No but the, you know, your group, your friendship. It’s been really nice to see Stan with his friends. He belongs with you guys, it’s like what he was missing all those years. Stan came back to life, came back to me, but with you all, it’s like he really got his life back. And I think it’s what we deserve.”

The last words hit him hard and suddenly Richie was out of breath again. He felt the same pain in his chest, again.

“You think so?” he asked.

Patty nodded immediately,

“Of course,” she said, “we’ve all been through a lot these last few weeks, you all especially. And now we’re all back together, the way it’s supposed to be. We deserve that.”

Patty turned to look at him now, laying a hand over his,

“You need to let yourself move on. The longer you stare at him, wondering how it happened, the less time you have with him. Don’t do that to yourself.”

He hadn’t realized he’d been holding his breath until she squeezed his hand. What came out was a choked sob crossed with a laugh, a sound he didn’t know he was capable of making. He dropped his head onto his knees.

They didn’t say anything after that, but sat watching as the sun rose over them. Patty held onto his hand until the sun came up and silently, they returned to the house, and went to bed.

The pain in his chest had subsided, but he couldn’t shake the feeling of something else hanging over him. For nights on end, those final moments with Eddie replayed in his head every time he closed his eyes, but for the first night in a long time, when Richie closed his eyes, he drifted into a dreamless sleep.

Patty was right, it’s what they deserved.

5. Chapter 5

“No, absolutely not, that’s out of the question.”

Richie walked into the kitchen to Bev and Bill yelling about something. He’d only gone to bed a mere three hours ago, but he felt like he’d slept a lifetime. Their yelling, however, was not helping. His head was pounding and even the slightest noise made him want to throw himself off the balcony.

At the kitchen table, Patty smiled at him,

“Morning,” she said quietly as he took a seat next to her.

“Morning Richie,” Stan mumbled without looking up from his newspaper. He had to admire the scene a bit. Stan and Patty sitting next to each other at the dining table, Stan with a newspaper in front of him and a mug of coffee next to him, Patty with a book and a glass of orange juice in front of her. Stan wearing a proper nightsuit, *of course*, complete with a robe, a great contrast to Richie’s t-shirt from the day before and boxers.

He turned his attention to the kitchen island, now. Bev and Bill standing on opposite sides yelling unintelligibly, Bill’s stutter coming back as Bev continued a parade of “no’s” as he tried to speak.

It was kind of fun to watch, he had to admit.

Eddie sat next to Bill and Richie tried to catch his eye. Eddie stared down at the counter, arms crossed, his leg bouncing. He was biting his lip, too, and the bad feeling in the pit of Richie’s stomach got worse.

“What’s going on?” he asked, finally.

Ben sat at the island, coffee in hand, watching Bev and Bill stand across from each other, still yelling.

“Bill thinks we need to go back to Derry,” Ben shouted over them.

“Fuck no!” Richie yelled, without hesitation.

The group was quiet, staring at Richie now. Even Stan looked up at him, the rustling of his newspaper the only sound among them in that moment.

“Why would we go back?” he asked.

“A lot’s happened,” Bill started, “I think we need to go back and find out *what* exactly has changed.”

“We *just* got out of there! Like we literally JUST escaped with our lives and you wanna go back? So...what? We can almost die again?”

“Listen, Richie, if something’s happening, it’s coming from Derry,” Bill continued.

“I don’t give a fuck! Derry can get swallowed up into the earth for all I care!”

“I know it’s all still too fresh for us, but-”

“But nothing! It hasn’t even been a full month since we left there, okay? If Eddie and Stan so who cares? We’ve got them back and isn’t that the important thing? We don’t need to go back!”

“Richie-”

“No!”

Bill’s eyes grew wide, and they could see him stuttering, trying to get the words out, but nothing came.

“We’re not going back there, end of story. I can’t believe you thought that would be a good idea, man,” Richie said.

“It was my idea,” Stan said calmly.

He set his newspaper down, addressing Richie’s shocked expression,

“Something happened out there that none of us can explain. I don’t even know what happened in the first place. We came back for some reason, and if we want to understand it, we need to go back.”

“Are you hearing yourselves right now? You wanna go back? Back to that hell hole that we finally said ‘fuck off’ to? There’s no reason to go back, why can’t we just accept that we’re all back together and move on?”

He was looking at Patty now, but she only rested a hand over his.

“Richie,” Stan said, quietly, “I understand you don’t want to go back, but Eddie and I still need answers. Me, especially. I wasn’t there with you all last time so I don’t know what I’m missing here. There’s a gap in my memory that I can’t live with. We’ve all lived with that before and you know how awful it was.”

“No! I’m sorry you feel like that Stan but...I’m not going back there. If you all wanna go back, be my fucking guest but I’m not going,” he said.

Richie looked to Bev now, she was the only one who nodded along, but her eyes were far away, thinking it over. He knew that as she was making up her mind, they’d already made up theirs.

“Forget it,” he mumbled, storming out of the kitchen.

Out in the backyard, Richie stood with his eyes closed, taking a deep breath. The image of Neibolt crumbling into the ground replayed in front of him and he could feel himself shaking all over again.

“You okay?”

Eddie spoke up behind him. Richie couldn’t bring himself to answer, and stayed in his spot. He heard the rustling of the grass as Eddie approached, standing next to him now. His voice quite, low enough so he was the only one who could hear,

“I know you don’t want to go back, Rich, but...”

Richie snorted,

“Not you, too,” he groaned.

“I think Stan makes a good point,” he said, shrugging.

“You really wanna go back? After everything that happened?” he asked. Richie turned himself entirely to face Eddie now, but he stayed put.

“No,” he said, “I don’t want to, but I think we need to.”

“Why?”

His voice was quiet, desperate, trying to understand what had happened in the few hours he’d been asleep.

“I don’t remember anything, Rich,” Eddie said quietly, hands stuffed inside his jacket pockets, “and I don’t want to feel like that again. I see things in my dreams and I don’t know what they mean and I--”

“And you want to?” he asked, cutting him off.

Eddie looked up at him, confused,

“I do,” he whispered. “I hate feeling like there’s a part of me still left back there. I hate not knowing what happened.”

“And why is that so important? Isn’t it enough to just be back?” he asked.

Eddie opened his mouth to speak, but Richie couldn’t help himself,

“Wouldn’t it just be enough to leave that place forever? To just drive away? For good?”

Eddie’s brows furrowed, looking over him,

“This is something I have to do,” he said. “Stan and I both have to.”

He took another deep breath, but looked away.

“We need to go back to Derry, if you don’t wanna go, fine no one’s going to force you to go. But...” Eddie trailed off. He took a shaky breath and continued, this time, his voice barely above a whisper, “I need you, Rich. I need you with me.”

Richie’s heart leapt.

“Everytime we’re there something bad happens to you, and I don’t wanna take that risk again.”

“I know, and I can’t promise that something bad won’t happen again--because, come on, it’s Derry for fuck’s sake--but I can promise you that we’ll stick together this time. We go back together, we come back together.”

Richie searched his face, trying to find some fault, some hint of hesitation, anything that would tell him this was a bad idea, but he got nothing.

Because that was the thing about Eddie, Richie thought. He was the bravest among them, and even Derry wasn’t enough to scare him back. Back in the kitchen the rest were still fighting it out, but here was Eddie, standing in front of him, ready to go back and face it all. And Richie found himself relaxing slightly. He would go back, too, if Eddie did. No matter what happened, he could do anything as long as Eddie was by his side, and for a second he cursed that part about him, but instead he said,

“Fine. We go back together, we come back together.”

Eddie smiled, holding his hand out for him. Without a second thought, Richie took it, leading him back inside where the rest were still arguing about it.

“We’re going to Derry,” Richie announced.

The group stopped talking, looking at the two of them, waiting for them to continue.

“But I’m not driving,” he finished.

They broke out into smiles and soft laughter, nodding in agreement. Richie looked to Stan, sitting beside him,

“Ready?” Richie asked, clapping him on the shoulder. Stan sighed,

“Nope,” he said with a smile.

6. Chapter 6

Summary for the Chapter:

A memory and some faded polaroids.

The rest of the group made plans to leave downstairs. They could hear their voices all blend together after a while as they prepared.

Richie and Eddie did not join them for that.

Richie sat on the bed of the guest room as Eddie paced. They both realized they had no luggage with them, no change of clothes, nothing, but Richie couldn't care less about that right now.

“Are you gonna call her?” he asked.

Eddie stopped, staring at him with a blank expression.

“Who?”

“Your wife. Ex-wife? Widow? Whatever you wanna call her.”

“Right,” he said, quietly. “I have to.”

“You probably should.”

“I don’t know what to say.”

“Hey sweetheart, remember when my friend told you I was dead? Yeah, turns out he was lying and I’m alive,” he thought out loud.

“I don’t even wanna know how she’s gonna react to that,” he said.

“Well she almost killed me when I told her, so...” Richie trailed off.

“Right,” he mumbled.

Richie nodded. It was silent between them and Richie grew uncomfortable. He started speaking without thinking, just letting his mouth work faster than his brain.

“You had so much shit and I was the only one driving back I just thought...you know...she’d probably want it back.”

Eddie’s brows were furrowed, watching him closely. Richie waited for him to say something, but Eddie stayed quiet.

In his mind, he replayed that day, but stopped himself from telling him.

He remembers Myra, and how his first thought was how much she looked like his mother. He remembers his heart breaking, but he wasn’t sure why.

He pictured the little boy whose mother was too scared to let him out of her sight, and he somehow knew she was the same.

He remembers her crying, yelling at him, telling him he was lying, that her sweet Eddie was going to come back soon, she knew it.

He remembers her watching him quietly, the same intense stare Eddie’s mother would give him as they ran out the house. It really was a reincarnated Sonia, he thought.

He remembers his heart breaking all over again, handing over the two giant suitcases to her. He thought of the hoodie he’d taken from it, that lay in his car. He wondered, for a brief moment, if he should return that, too. But he didn’t.

He couldn’t.

Then there were the pictures.

A box of them, to be exact. She had disappeared into a bedroom with the suitcases and Richie had taken that as his cue to leave. She stepped out a moment later holding an old box, handing it to him almost...hesitantly.

It was heavier than he’d imagined, but he didn’t dare open it up in front of her. That would be too much, he knew.

“Eddie never threw anything out,” she had said. Richie only nodded, taking the box from her. For a moment, she couldn’t let go of it,

either. Her hand gripped the box tight, and she couldn't look at him, her eyes fixed on the box. But something in him wouldn't back down either, and pulled the box towards him rather harshly. She let her hand drop to her side and asked him to leave. He couldn't say anything.

It turned out he didn't need to.

What had she known that he didn't?

It had taken him only five seconds to open it, once he was back in his car. An old yearbook, from their senior year, the one where every page had their handwriting on it. From jokes he only half remembered, to crude drawings around the teachers' pictures, to the signature pages filled with only the notes of their group.

His hands trembled as he flipped through them, as though they might turn to dust in his hands if he weren't careful.

Beneath the book were polaroids of all of them, from Halloween, some from Christmas, and a few from graduation. But he knew of one that should've been there, but wasn't. The one he'd taken back all those years ago.

Richie felt like he was going to throw up.

And there, laying on the bed as Eddie paced back and forth, Richie felt the same nausea he succumbed to only two weeks prior.

"What'd she say?" Eddie asked, pulling him out of his thoughts.

Richie shrugged,

"She cried," he said. There was a flash of pain in Eddie's eyes as he cast them down. Eddie's own heart broke for her. "Said that she recognized me from some photos you had, though. Something about a yearbook."

Richie watched him closely and could see Eddie tense up.

"I have to go see her," he said, quietly.

“We’ll stop on the way,” Richie said.

“You don’t have to-” Eddie started.

“We’ll stop on the way,” Richie repeated with just a little more force this time. He wasn’t going to see her, he knew as much. He couldn’t imagine what she might do to him if he showed up back on her doorstep, two weeks later, Eddie in tow.

Eddie sighed, but nodded.

He opened his mouth to speak, but hesitated. He watched Richie, though he pretended not to notice, going back to his phone.

“You think now’s a good time to talk?” Eddie said,

“About what?” Richie asked.

Eddie scanned his face, and shook his head,

“Never mind. It can wait.”

A knock at the door made them both tense, only relaxing as Ben poked his head through,

“We’re leaving soon, who’s driving?”

Eddie raised a hand, Ben nodded.

“I’m taking Bev, Patty and Stan. Mike and Bill can ride with you,” he said. The two nodded.

“We gotta make a stop on the way,” Richie said. Eddie turned back to him, a confused look on his face. Richie ignored him, he knew Ben would understand him.

Ben nodded again.

“Downstairs in five minutes.”

“Shouldn’t the undead be in the same car?” Richie asked, walking

back out into Ben's driveway.

"Richie," Bev said, annoyed.

"I'm just saying, if they came back together, maybe they should stay together," he said, shrugging.

"If you don't want us in the car, Rich, you just have to tell us," Bill said, brushing past him.

"Who wouldn't want you in the car with them, Billy baby," Richie said, yawning.

"You gonna be okay?" Bev asked.

"Aren't I always?" he replied.

Bev frowned, looking him up and down.

"Have you talked to him?" she asked.

"That's all we've been doing, Bev," he said. She tilted her head,

"Richie," she said.

Richie stuffed his hands in his pockets and looked away. Bev had a way of staring straight through him, seeing what he was hiding.

He hated it.

"We're stopping on the way. He needs to go home, see his wife," he said quietly.

Bev nodded, resting a gentle hand on his arm, and kissed his cheek.

"Stay close," she said softly. He smiled, and headed for his car.

7. Chapter 7

Summary for the Chapter:

A beautiful day for a confrontation.

When Eddie had told them he would stop at his place on the way, he hadn't expected any of them to wait up for him.

In fact, he had asked them all to go ahead without him, Richie was staying back already and they would be fine. They'd be going in the opposite direction, anyway, and it was no use slowing down their trip for something Eddie had to do alone.

But maybe it was their loyalty, or their dependency on each other, or maybe it was the morbid curiosity they had about Eddie's life before their return, that they all stopped, parking next to each other in the building's garage.

He knew looking at them that it was loyalty, though, and he was never more grateful for this group of people in front of him.

Sure, he had to do it alone, but knowing they were there with him made him relax just a little bit.

"Do we...." Richie had started, looking to him. Eddie watched them look between each other, all shrugging, mumbling something.

"You guys want to come up with me?" he asked, surprised.

It wasn't an invitation, it was for clarification.

The other seven stood there in front of him, nodding and shrugging as if to say *of course we're coming with you*, Eddie and all he could do was stare in bewilderment.

"Why?" he asked.

"To pay our respects," Stan deadpanned.

Bev and Mike tried to hide their smiles, Richie nodding in

agreement.

“I mean, part of me doesn’t want to, cause, you know, she might try and kill me but...the other part of me *really* wants to see what happens,” Richie said. “We missed Patty’s face when Stan showed up, I don’t wanna miss this one.”

“You didn’t miss much,” Patty said without looking. “I fainted almost immediately.” Stan nodded in agreement.

“Don’t wanna miss that,” Richie said.

Eddie inhaled and they could all hear the annoyance in his voice without him saying a single word.

The group stared at Eddie and he knew they wouldn’t accept any other answer.

“The elevator has a maximum capacity of ten people and there are eight of us and I really feel like that’s pushing it and I don’t wanna do that.”

“Stairs?” Ben offered.

“God no, it’s on the fifteenth floor,” Eddie said.

That did not deter any of them. He waited for one of, any of them, to say they would stay back or they were going to continue on, but nothing came.

Eddie sighed, almost in relief. He couldn’t ask them to stay with him, couldn’t ask them to witness whatever shitshow was about to go down, but knowing that they would walk beside him anyway? That felt like a weight lifting off his shoulders.

“Thank you, guys,” he said, quietly, looking at the ground.

“Always,” he heard Bev say.

But then there was the thought about what he would say when he saw her. How he would explain himself to his wife.

Ex wife?

Widow?

What did he call her, now?

“I don’t know what to say,” he mumbled, digging the heel of his shoe in the ground.

“You’ll know,” Stan said, quietly. Eddie looked up at him and Stan smiled softly, nodding at him. “When you see her you’ll know what to say.”

He relaxed slightly. But his stomach churned and he felt like he was going to throw up. The others began walking towards the building but Eddie stopped and turned back towards the car.

“I’m gonna be sick,” he mumbled, his vision going hazy. He bent over, his hands on his knees, dry heaving.

Richie stayed with him, his hand running up and down his back reassuringly.

“You’re gonna be fine,” he said, quietly. Eddie shook his head,

“I should’ve stayed dead,” he mumbled.

“Too late for that, Eds,” Richie said, patting him on the back.

There was some conversation about whether they should go up to the door with him, or if they should hang back, watch from a corner.

Richie suggested that he call Eddie and have him keep his phone on speaker the entire time he’s in there.

It was met with a resounding no.

He still thought it was a pretty good idea, even if he did see it in a crime movie once.

In the end, they’d crammed into the hallway that now seemed too

small for all of them, huddling around Eddie as he knocked on the door, Richie right beside him.

They'd all stopped breathing as they heard the slow shuffle of footsteps behind the door. Eddie was shaking so hard he thought he might faint. His vision blurred and his mouth was dry.

Slowly, or at least to the group it seemed slowly, the door opened and Myra stood in front of them.

From the corner of his eye, Richie looked around, trying to gauge their reaction. They were just as surprised as he'd been when he'd first met her.

“Eddie?”

Her voice was quiet, as though she could barely say his name, as if she might say it too loud and he would disappear.

There was heartbreak in her voice and they all looked away.

“Hi honey,” he said quietly, trying to smile.

They waited for Myra to say something, the look on her face growing increasingly worried, panicked.

She slammed the door, and for a minute Richie sympathized with her.

“Why does that keep happening,” Eddie mumbled. He straightened himself up, and took a deep breath and knocked again.

“Myra it’s me, please open the door, we need to talk,” he said, knocking faster.

The group stayed beside him, and as if on instinct, standing taller around him. Richie took his hand, giving it a reassuring squeeze. He could see the corners of Eddie’s mouth turn up into a small smile.

The door opened a crack, and there was a sharp inhale around them, each one bracing for what might come next.

“It’s not you,” Myra whispered.

“It is,” he said. “I know it’s gonna sound crazy but...”

Richie hit him with his elbow, shaking his head,

“I have to tell her,” he whispered angrily,

“Make something up!” Richie whispered back.

“You.”

Eddie and Richie whipped their heads back to the door as it opened a crack, Myra’s eyes focused on Richie,

“What’re you doing here?” she asked.

Her voice was somewhere between confusion and pain and Richie couldn’t really blame her.

“Nice to see you again, Myra,” he said, nodding.

“What kind of sick joke is this, Tozier?” she asked.

“It’s not a joke,” Eddie said, cutting in. “Myra please open the door. We need to talk.”

She looked between the two of them, and finally stepped aside to let them in.

“Only you,” she said, looking at Eddie.

“Richie comes with me,” Eddie said firmly.

It was perhaps the first time Eddie had sounded so sure of himself. Myra knew this too by the way she looked at him. She took a deep breath and nodded,

“Fine,” she said through gritted teeth.

Richie turned back to the group and nodded. Bev gave him a thumbs up just as he entered the apartment again.

Author's Note:

I started writing this in class because my professor's voice puts me to sleep otherwise. Please let me know what you think! I don't know how many chapters it'll be just yet, but I'm excited for you all to see where it goes!

Title taken from the song "Never Gonna Let Go" by Shinedown

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0bTTgSHzbI>